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The Role of the Engineer School in Collective Training

By Mr. Shawn M. Bowen

There are probably more glamorous subjects to read about, but this one is important to everything we do—every day—in the Army: *standards*. There is a standard established for every task that we do in the course of our daily efforts. But how do we determine the correct standard? In the engineer field, this is done by the Collective Training Division (CTD) at the United States Army Engineer School. Anyone out in the field who has not visited the Engineer School may have no idea about what CTD does. Since individuals in CTD are either retired or active duty military, they consider the same questions you have. Training management in today's modular Army is confusing to many, and regardless of the technologies available, most people are too busy to spend their time looking for the latest and greatest items available. The biggest problems for training management seem to be—Who does what? Where do I find it? Whom can I talk to? What is the phone number? For example, a unit executive officer had been searching for collective task outlines for more than a month when he stumbled onto a link to CTD, allowing us to quickly steer him in the right direction for all of his training management needs. The first question—Who does what?—is easy; answers to the remaining questions above can be addressed to the telephone contact or at the online site at the end of this article.

Collective Training Division

CTD is an organization within the Engineer School Directorate of Training and Leader Development (DOTLD) that is responsible for the analysis and development of all collective training products for every engineer unit in the Army. The chief of CTD works for the DOTLD. There are currently five civilian employees and two senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) assigned to the division. These NCOs typically have had extensive

platoon sergeant experience and recent deployments to today's operational theaters. Civilians, along with their institutional knowledge, bring their experience of writing tasks and developing training products for the field. These combined attributes offer a fresh perspective to training product development.

Combined Arms Training Strategy

The engineer field has 18 different military occupational specialties (MOSs). CTD develops collective training and evaluation outlines (T&EO) for each

MOS. Combined Arms Training Strategy (CATS) products have replaced the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) manuals. As the Army's overarching strategy for current and future training of the force, CATS is designed for use within the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle—enabling the unit to ramp up its training intensity according to its deployment cycle. The basis for CATS is a series of proponent, unit, and institutional strategies describing training events, frequencies, and resources required to train to standard—and describing how the Army will train the total force to standard in the institutions and units. CATS also documents the quality and justification for all training resources required to execute the training. Collective task outlines are accessible through Digital Training Management Systems (DTMS).

Full Spectrum Operations Mission-Essential Task List

The Engineer School, in conjunction with the Combined Arms Center–Collective Training Division (CAC–CTD), is responsible for the development of the theater engineer command and engineer brigades' full spectrum operations (FSO) mission-essential task list (METL). The review of the FSO METL is conducted semi-annually by the Army METL Review Board (AMRB), which ensures that the Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA)-approved standardized FSO METLs are synchronized with—

- Strategic environment as defined by the Army Training and Leader Development Guidance (ATLDG) and ARFORGEN.
- Table of organization and equipment (TO&E)-designed mission (mission profile) of selected Army brigade and higher-echelon units.

- Any changes in doctrine and the regulations governing task design.


CAC is the HQDA executive agent for the FSO METL, which represents those minimum fundamental doctrinal tasks that a unit was designed to perform in any operational environment.

A standardized FSO METL provides the readiness community a yardstick with which to compare the readiness of like units, while providing unit leaders the flexibility needed to focus on those fundamental METL tasks that need training. Unit leaders train on FSO METL supporting tasks and under conditions that support mission readiness. Commanders will use HQDA-approved, standardized METL and focus training on the METL tasks not assessed as “trained.” Units will train on one METL—their FSO METL, which is augmented only when the unit is assigned a mission it was not designed to perform. If the assigned mission is outside of the unit’s core functions/designed capabilities, the commander will analyze the assigned mission, identify the mission-essential tasks and, if necessary, add additional tasks to the unit’s FSO METL as a temporary modification to accommodate the assigned mission.

Technical Rescue Collective Tasks

The newest additions to the engineer collective tasks are technical rescue (TR) tasks, which enable engineer leaders to enhance the training strategy for civil support operations. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (known as the Stafford Act) is the primary federal statute giving the President power to direct federal agencies to provide assistance to state and local authorities during an incident. The purpose of this assistance is to save lives, alleviate human suffering, protect public health and safety, and lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe. In the past, engineers have provided civil support and most certainly will be called on in the future to do so. It is imperative that engineers have the knowledge and trained capabilities to assist state and local governments in time of need. TR is a complex operation combining Department of Defense personnel and civilian first responders. Legal thresholds and certifications are areas of concern, but there is no doubt that bringing engineers to the fight dramatically enhances capabilities and saves lives.

CTD Access and Contact

Through the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) site for Engineer Collective Training, you will have access to the above-mentioned products and the people within CTD. For further information about training management, call (573) 563-6237. 

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